

# The Christmas-tide of Shanghai Rotary Club

## Project “Toys Hospital” in 1930s-40s

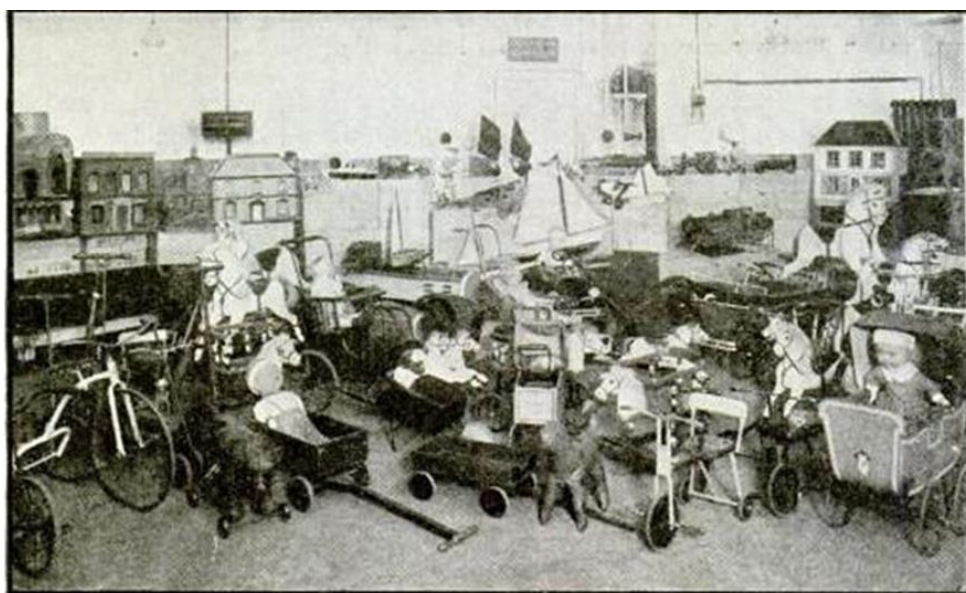
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It was the tradition of Shanghai Rotary Club, Republic of China (中華民國上海扶輪社), to distribute Christmas packs to children, since the Club's inception in 1919. Toys gift is always the popular item to children during the year end festive seasons.

In [Christmas 1932](#), Shanghai Rotary Club initiated a gift program for children – Project “Toys Hospital” (*see photo*). The Club collected thousands of discarded toys through the co-operation of local newspapers, and rehabilitated for distribution among unfortunate children of the city.



Never was there a merrier institution than the “Toys Hospital” operated again in [1934](#) by members of Shanghai Rotary Club. Through the help of local newspapers, discarded playthings and broken toys were gathered at various receiving depots throughout the city, then rush to the “Toys Hospital” for surgical treatment. Thus more than 5,000 toys in good condition were distributed to children in various institutions in Shanghai at Christmas time.

# SHANGHAI ROTARY AS FATHER CHRISTMAS



1932



1933



1934

*In a previous issue we showed what Shanghai Rotary did for the poor children in this district in the way of distribution of toys at Christmas. This year, the effort sponsored by "Hark" Harkson of the Henningsen Produce Company, has gone over in a very much bigger way as can be seen from the photographs of the 1934 collection of toys, which totalled over 7,000.*

*The pictures above show the reconstructed toys in the Henningsen Factory in 1932 and 1933 as compared with 1934.*

*Mr. Harkson is to be congratulated on giving birth to a very fine idea which has brought happiness to thousands of youngsters, both Chinese and Foreign, in Shanghai, who otherwise would not have had any toys at Christmas.*





In [Christmas 1935](#), Shanghai Rotarians distributed more than 8,000 toys to poor children.

Marvelous in [1936](#), the program called for an even greater number. To increase the number of contributions, Shanghai Rotarians held a needlework and general handwork competition for children in connection with a Better Home Exhibition staged in late November. Rules called for a gift of one worn or broken toy with each entry, so that children not interested in needlework might also compete. A poster competition with the same provisions for entry was also held.

The outbreak of Second Sino-Japanese War in July [1937](#) made most of the cities in north and central China suffering in battles. The “Toys Hospital” project in Shanghai was still carried on, amongst many of the heavy services shouldered such as war refugees relief, wounded medical supports, etc., of which Shanghai Rotary Club was the central command depot, liaising Rotary International and the Red Cross International, for all other clubs across the country.

## [Christmas 1940](#)

In Christmas 1940, Restel O. Scott (*American, “Burial—Funeral Directing”*) was the Project Chair. He recorded about 6,000 toys were annually repaired by the “Toys Hospital” and were distributed. For the year of 1940, the result was much fruitful in double.

Excerpt below from the Club’s Report shows how the Rotarians and wives in action:--

### [24 October 1940](#)

Bud Morton reports that a truck load of toys was received at the Olympic Circus on October 13th, and that the committee is also very grateful to those members of the public who have asked them to call for large toys during the past two weeks. These when reconditioned, will be most suitable for presentation to the institutions where so many under-privileged youngsters are now being taken care of.

Two more Toy matinees are now announced, where the admission fee for each child will be one toy, either new or worn. Keep the dates, time, and places in mind. The program and arrangements have been kindly made by T. J. Holt, A. R. Hager, Percy Chu and Jim Perkins, and you may be sure the children will be delighted with the Technicolor cartoons, and other pictures which will be shown.

October 17th---Sunday, 10:30 a.m.---Nanking Theatre

November 3rd---Sunday, 10:30 a.m.---Metropole Theatre

It's not too early for the Rotary Annes to think about the materials needed for the dolls' dresses, etc. While cleaning put before the winter, or if you are packing to join the evacuees from Shanghai, bundle what pieces you may have, together, and send them to one of the collection centers.

### 31 October 1940

We know that the matinee arranged for last Sunday at the Nanking Theatre was a success, as it always is, and that all the kiddies attending as well as the grown-ups who were with them had a fine time viewing Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, probably Pop-Eye too, Oswald the Rabbit, and Pluto the Pup.

Don't forget, if you missed last Sunday, there is still another one this coming Sunday, November 3rd, at 10:30 a.m. at the Metropole Theatre. This admission is still one toy---new or repairable! Help make the same success there!!!

Thanks be to the generosity of the China Fibre Containers Co., the Toy Hospital will be well supplied with cardboard for containers for the distribution of the toys, as well as for repairs to some of the toys.

Rotary Annes, don't forget about the materials, silks, cottons, laces, or wools, for the dollies' dresses.

### 7 November 1940

Daily calls are received at the office, from residents of Shanghai who are leaving shortly for their homelands, stating that there are quantities of worn toys which is hoped can be used by our hospital. It is possible that this matter of discarded toys, books and games, at our Rotarians' homes have been overlooked?

Some 6,600 toys of all description were received at the Nanking Theatre matinee, Sunday October 27th, and it is thought at least a similar number were collected last Sunday, November 3rd at the Metropole Theatre.

Work is progressing at the factory where helpers will be welcome, especially to supervise the repair of some of the dolls and animals, who need new limbs, etc., and Rotary Annes or friends will enjoy dressing the dolls, to make them attractive to the little tots who have so little pleasure during the year.

### 14 November 1940

Nearly 6,000 toys were collected during the matinee on Sunday, November 3rd at the Metropole Theatre.

## Christmas 1941

Before Christmas 1941, the Shanghai International Settlement (上海公共租界) was stormed in by the Imperial Japanese forces due to the outbreak of the Pacific War. However, some 22 institutions were remembered by the Shanghai Rotary Club in addition to its “Toys Hospital” which was strived to survive in the hard time. The Project was, unfortunately, not feasible to carry on in the next years because the normal Rotary services were interrupted by the Japanese military control.

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## Glossary

(1) [T. J. Holt](#) = Ting-Jan Holt = 何挺然

T. J. Holt, Chinese, General Manager of Shanghai United Amusements, joined Shanghai Rotary Club on 5 January 1933 with classification “Recreation—Motion Picture Theatre”. He was the owner of Nanking Theatre, Metropole Theatre, Majestic Theatre, and several others.

(2) [A. R. Hager](#)

A. R. Hager, American, joined Shanghai Rotary Club on 14 October 1920 with classification

“Office Appliances Equipment and Stationery---Office Equipment Distributing”.

(3) [Percy Chu](#) = 朱博泉

Percy Chu (1898-2001), Chinese, joined Shanghai Rotary Club on 24 August 1926 with classification “Finance—Reserve Banking”. He was Club President in 1934-1935. He was banker, insurer, security exchange operator, motion picture distributor, educationist of commerce, and served directors for more than 100 companies in Shanghai and other cities. Chu was a special guest invited to speak at the 85th Rotary International Convention held in Taipei, Taiwan (臺灣臺北) in June 1994.

(4) [Nanking Theatre](#) = 南京大戲院

Nanking Theatre, designed by Rotarian Architect Robert Fan (范文照), was built in 1929-1930. The building fabric today has already been renovated into Shanghai Concert Hall (上海音樂廳).

(5) [Metropole Theatre](#) = 大上海大戲院

